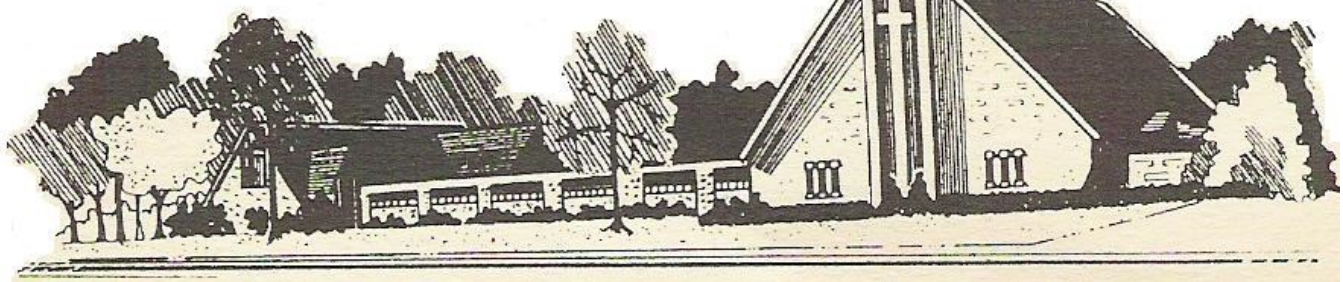
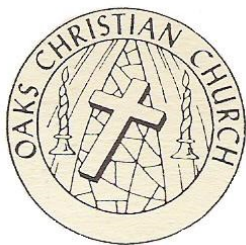


OAKS NOTES



A Note from Pastor Don

Oaks Christian Church is a family church that loves to share God's word, God's Love, and God's fellowship with the world. We are a church in the near inner loop that strives to be a helpful part of the community. We are about Deep Christian spirituality, a true community and a passion for Justice. We celebrate communion every Sunday service and all who believe are welcome to receive.



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It's that time of year now when we start to take down all those special decorations around the house. All those things that make us smile and remind us that God came to be

with us! The wreath comes off the front door. The nativity sets are carefully packed away (we had five out this year). The angels come out of the windows, and the nutcracker dolls come off the mantle. The greenery comes off the hand rails that go up the stairs, and the reindeer comes off the tables. And last but not least, the Christmas tree comes down... with all its special ornaments: the ones my grandmother passed on to us, the ones we made out of cookie dough from our first year of marriage (because we couldn't afford to buy ornaments), and all those dancers and Barbie ones from Kelsey's childhood.

Seeing all these things remind us how God came to be with us. They remind us of a special season, and we celebrate the birth of Jesus during that season.

The rest of the year, we see how God loves us and sent His only Son to save us... not by what we have hung on our walls, but by what we are able to see in the world around us. Decorations that God has put up, so to speak. When I go to the beach and watch a sunset, I see God. When I see a little baby in their mother's arms and that

mother smiling, I see God. When I see a couple hand-in-hand truly in love, doesn't matter what age, I see God. When I see an individual who is terminally ill, realizing that the fight is over and they are at peace, I see God.

God is constantly decorating our world with sights and sounds that draw us closer to Him in so many ways, and those things never come down off the wall! They are always there! And there are always new ones everywhere we look. I'm really not good at making New Year's resolutions, but I do make commitments.

So maybe this year, we can commit to looking for some ways we may not have seen before that God has chosen to light up our life, or decorate so to speak. They're there, we just have to open our eyes. And when we see them, they bring that smile and peace to us that only He can give! If we can learn to see Him in the world we live in, it's like having Christmas every day of the year.

See ya Sunday!

In His Grip,
Don

COMMUNITY LUNCH STARTS NEW TRADITION

Oaks volunteers now taking free meals on the road, giving bags to homeless

By Katie Spencer

The Community Lunch is making some changes for the better. During the last lunch on December 27, Ruth Conover, Sammy Sarabia, Chris Hamilton, and I put together lunch bags and packed them in the back of Ruth's car. We drove around the city and fed the homeless. It was a truly wonderful experience and most appreciated by the people on the receiving end.

We will continue to do the lunches this way, as this was very successful. We are calling it "Oaks Christian Church Lunch Angels." There are a couple of ways you can help.

The first is by donating items for the lunch bags. Items can include foods such as packaged crackers, bags of tuna, canned fruit/vegetables, or canned meat. (Please remember that all cans need to have a pull-up lid, because people on the receiving end may not carry can openers.) Other helpful items include toothbrushes, toothpaste, hair brushes, combs, small packages of tissue, little hand sanitizers, lotions, etc. We will be setting up a box for the donations very soon, but for now, please give donations to Ruth, Sammy, Chris, or myself.

The second way to help is by becoming a lunch angel.

Instead of meeting at noon, as was the previous custom, we will begin meeting at 10 a.m. to package the bags and load them into vehicles. Anyone is welcome to come and help. We would love it!



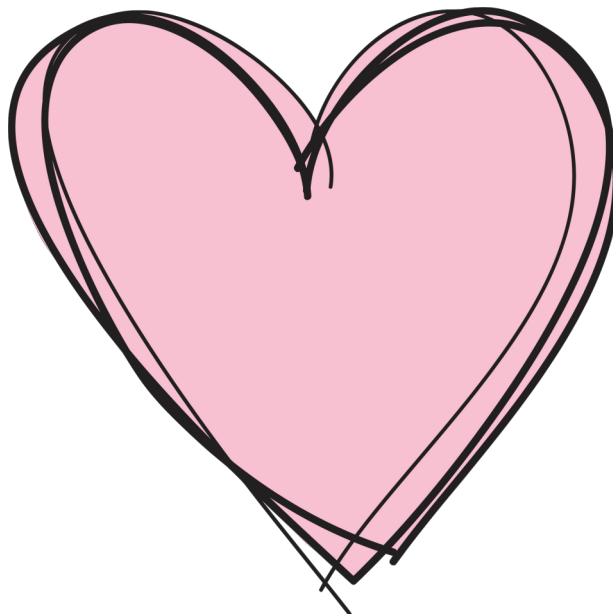
Chris Hamilton passed out food to the homeless in downtown Houston in Dec.

EXTENDING A HEARTFELT THANKS TO OAKS

To the Church,

I just wanted to express my gratitude for the Christmas bonus. I've known y'all to be a generous group ever since I started working here, but there are times when I am overwhelmed by your kindness. Your staff gift was much appreciated by my husband and me. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

-Holly Leger



I just wanted to say thank you for the very generous Christmas "gift" that was given to Linda and I by the congregation. Your generosity was so much more than we ever expected! I just want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We truly count it a blessing from God to be able to serve at the Oaks. We are also looking forward to another year of serving with you and seeing what the Lord will do!

-Pastor Don and Linda

MEMBERS BEGIN NEW YEAR WITH RESOLUTIONS

We asked people at Oaks what some of their goals were for 2015. Thank you to those who e-mailed their responses. We wish all of you luck with achieving your resolutions (whether printed in the newsletter or not). You can do it!



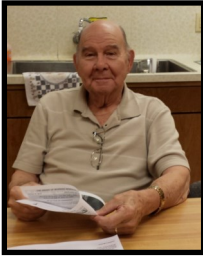
"I resolve to pray more, complain less... Stop procrastinating, start initiating... But – that's a daily commit...not just a New Year's resolution!"

-Linda Joseph



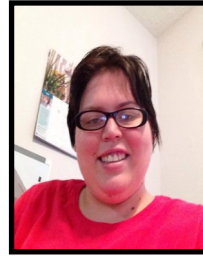
"Watch where I place my feet!! Start practicing dropping and rolling techniques!!"

-Barb Scantlin



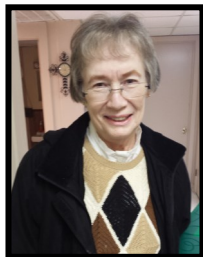
"About ten years ago, I made a resolution to never make another resolution, and I kept it!"

-Don Murray



"Trying to lose weight. Trying to get a job. Trying not to eat too much. Trying to save money."

-Megan Poling



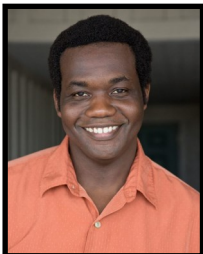
"Mine is 'to be thankful' every day."

-Dorene Drake



"I am going to be more thankful for all that I am blessed with. Life is a joy. So live like you believe it."

-Bob Simons



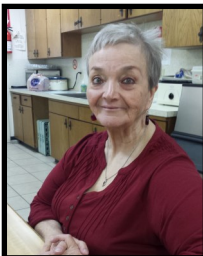
"I plan to lose weight just like everyone else, and feel good about it when I quit two months into it... like everyone else."

-DJ Davis



"To show my appreciation for all the people who look after me."

-Pat Scruggs



"I would like to be more tolerant, be more patient with people and try to keep my mouth closed when asked for an opinion. Oh, and to be less bossy."

-Jimmye Saldivar



"To double my business in 2015."

-Mike Powers



"Instead of saying my New Year's resolution is... I want to say my New Life resolution is... that I will be more compassionate to the truly uneducated, poor and less fortunate. Be more giving to those in need than to receive for myself. To not only believe in myself, but to help others believe that people are born good, and not to judge them when they make choices we do not approve of. We do not know where these people have been in life or what they have sacrificed through, so it is not our place to say what is right and wrong. Lastly to love, love and love more unconditionally. To truly listen to people, and try my hardest to give them my greatest gift of all, and that is my time. In return I will appreciate the time people give me as well, and I will accept that as a truly blessed gift." - **Katie Spencer**

TIPS FOR KEEPING NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS

If you made resolutions for the new year, check out this article from the Huffington Post with tips to help you keep those 2015 goals:

Be Realistic

It's easy to say you want to save so much money or lose so much weight. While having specific goals are great, maybe be realistic by not putting numbers to it. Instead of saying 'I want to save \$10,000 to travel,' say you want to put 25 percent of each paycheck into a savings account. That way it's not putting too big of a hurting on your needs.

Baby Steps

The saying 'go big or go home' is great for some people, but in reality we are setting ourselves up for failure. Start small and progressively be more aggressive with your goal.

If you're planning on losing weight, it can really hurt you to go really big in the opening week. If you're not used to not eating a lot of grains and you completely cut them out of your diet the first week, your cravings are going to be worse.

Or if you plan on training for a marathon, you can't expect to go from out of shape to running 10 miles quickly. If you overwhelm yourself the first week, you're not going to want to keep going the second week. Baby steps, people.

Tell People About It

It will keep you accountable. If you tell everyone you're going to quit smoking, people will call you out if they see you with a cigarette or lighter. The more people that know about it, the more people there are to police you -- which can be a blessing if you really want to change or a curse if you're making a resolution just because.

Track Your Progress

Yes, we all hate that person that shows progression every day and week on Facebook. But if you have real friends and good family on your social media, don't be afraid to post some updates -- you may even motivate others to follow in your footsteps.

Try to keep the updates no more than monthly, whether you did well or not. Talk about the struggles or your proud moments. If you hit a bump in the road, that's OK because you will overcome it as long as you're dedicated to self improvement.

Ask For Support

With all your friends and family aware of your resolution, it's

great to have someone to lean on. Even better, find someone that wants to reach a similar goal as you. Find someone else that wants to travel the world and look to each other for support. They'll understand that it's hard when life throws you curve balls and it's someone to vent to.

Besides friends, there are tons of apps out there to help you out with tips on how to achieve specific goals while also tracking them. There's no shame in seeking help, whether from your parents or professionally. Do what you need to do to get your life where you want it.

Be Patient

Nothing comes easy. Totally cliché, but totally true. You have to be patient. You can't expect things to just happen. You have to remain dedicated to the cause. If you don't put in the work, you're not going to see the results.

On another note, sometimes life isn't fair. You can work hard and not see results or life can throw curve balls at you, but you have to be patient enough to know that you just got to keep going.

So what, you gained one pound this week. You'll probably lose five next week. So you ditched your friends this week because you were too busy, go out with them twice the next week. Your tire blew out and you had to spend three weeks worth of the money you've been saving, so up your savings percentage.

You can't give up when life gets hard, just like you can't give up when you have a misstep in your resolution.

Be Selfish

This one is probably the hardest for some people to do, while for others it's the easiest. If you REALLY want to achieve your goals, you're going to need to put yourself first -- above your significant other, above your social life, above other people's needs. Now that's not to say you should put it as top priority, but it should definitely be up there.

If you're cutting back on drinking, it's OK to skip out on a night with your friends. Suggest a coffee date or movie night to make up for it. If you're saving money, suggest a Netflix night instead of heading to the theaters. If the smell of smoke makes you want to light your cigarette, skip out on the club concert if you feel it's necessary.

If you really want to achieve it, you have to sacrifice. Others will understand as long as you make it clear why you are or aren't doing something; make it clear that you're just trying to better yourself.

January 2015

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 New Year's Day	2 Renovada Bible Study @ 7:30	3
4 Sun.School @ 9:30 Worship @ 10:45	5	6 CWF @ 10 Girl Scouts @ 6:30	7 Handbells @ 6 Choir @ 7	8	9 Boy Scouts @ 7:30 Renovada Bible Study @ 7:30	10 Renovada event in Kirchner from 6-10
11 Sun.School @ 9:30 Worship @ 10:45	12	13 Prayer Circle @ 9:30 CWF @ 10 Tupperware @ 6 Bible Study @ 6:15	14 Handbells @ 6 Choir @ 7	15	16 Boy Scouts @ 7:30 Renovada Bible Study @ 7:30	17
18 Sun.School @ 9:30 Worship @ 10:45 Dialysis Support Group Mtg. @ 2	19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	20 CWF @ 10 Tupperware @ 6 Bible Study @ 6:15	21 Handbells @ 6 Choir @ 7	22	23 Boy Scouts @ 7:30 Renovada Bible Study @ 7:30	24 CMF Breakfast @ 9 Lunch Angels @ 10
25 Sun.School @ 9:30 Worship @ 10:45	26	27 CWF @ 10 Bible Study @ 6:15 Girl Scouts @ 6:30	28 Handbells @ 6 Choir @ 7	29	30 Boy Scouts @ 7:30 Renovada Bible Study @ 7:30	31

Happy January Birthdays:

- 1.1 Sharon Robertson
- 1.6 Dorene Drake
- 1.14 Oliver Harrison, Alissa Hurseman
- 1.16 Barb Scantlin
- 1.23 Anne Hudson, Agnes Pratt
- 1.26 Michael "Mikey" Spencer Jr.
- 1.30 Evalyn Ratcliff

Happy January Anniversaries:

- 1.7 Bob & Sara Simons



PRAYER CORNER

We are going to start including a "prayer corner" in each newsletter this year. If you would like to include a person's name in this corner, please notify one of the Oaks elders, or contact our office. We believe this will be a wonderful reminder to lift up those in need.

Don't forget that Oaks also holds a "prayer circle" every second Tuesday of the month. We are always happy to pray for and with one another! As James 5:16 says, "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."

Gloria Slocum

Bernie Slaven

Lilli Curry

From the Treasurer - Dorene Drake

Operating Account '14	2014 OCTOBER	2014 NOVEMBER	2014 DECEMBER
Deposits	\$9,494.39	\$9,952.00	\$9,745.10
Disbursements	\$(10,643.96)	\$(8,675.18)	\$(9,922.49)
Difference	\$(1,149.57)	\$1,276.82	\$(177.59)

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cHRIStMAS Festivities at oaks

